

## **SOUTH KOREA'S ECO-MARK**

### **Introduction**

According to the South Korean Ministry of the Environment (MOE or Ministry), rapid industrialization and urbanization during the last three decades and South Korea's rapid economy growth may have contributed in deteriorating the country's environmental conditions. As a result, the Korean government established "Harmony between Environment and Development" as a main policy goal of the country, with emphasis on pollution prevention and resource management. To realize this policy, the Korean Ministry of the Environment launched its ecolabeling certification program, known as "Eco-Mark," on June 1, 1992. Eco-Mark is a voluntary program that awards a seal of approval to environmentally preferable products. It is primarily intended to encourage companies to promote the design, production, marketing, and use of products that have reduced environmental impact, as well as to provide consumers with information to make environmentally sound purchasing decisions.

Between 1993 and 1994, the number of Eco-Mark product categories increased from 12 to 36, and within those categories the number of products awarded the Eco-Mark label increased from 96 to 219.

### **Recent Developments**

Korea recently (as of June 1997) became one of the newest members of the Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN).

### **Program Summary**

The Korean Eco-Mark program is administered by the Korean Ministry of Environment. New product category suggestions are directed to the Ministry's Technology Development Division. This Division makes the final decision as to which product categories are suitable for the Eco-Mark. The Ministry then drafts the award criteria with technical assistance from the Korean Academy of Industrial Technology (KAITECH). The draft criteria are released to the public for comments during public hearings. Based on the comments received, criteria are revised and finalized.

Once criteria are finalized and released to the public, manufacturers wishing to obtain the Eco-Mark can apply to be eco-certified. A "practical committee" within the Korean Environmental Labelling Association (KELA), (who handles manufacturers' applications) is in charge of awarding the label to companies wishing to obtain eco-certification for their products that meet the prescribed award criteria.

Once the product fulfills the criteria, it is eligible to receive the Eco-Mark. In addition to the initial application fee of 30,000 won (\$33 US), the user of the Eco-Mark must pay an annual fee ranging from 300,000 won to 1,000,000 won (\$330 US - \$1,090 US), based on the product's annual sales (more expensive goods command a higher fee). This fee, collected by the KELA, is used to maintain the Eco-Mark program as well as to increase public awareness of environmental issues.

## **Program Methodology**

The Eco-Mark program has found that, in practice, the significant data requirements of the life-cycle assessment approach typical for determining award criteria are difficult to meet. The Korean Eco-Mark's approach to product certification is therefore based on defining the single most important environmental impact for each product category.

## **References**

United Nations Council on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), International Trade Division, Trade and Environment Section, 1993. *Eco-labelling and International Trade: Preliminary Information from Seven Systems (Draft)*, Geneva, Switzerland, May 19.

Korean Environmental Labelling Association (KELA), *The Eco-Labelling Program in Korea -- Its administrative structures and procedures*, Eco-Mark Homepage, <http://www.gcc.go.kr/ehome/ecomark.html>.

## **Product Categories**

### *Final Categories*

- Products made from recycled paper
- Toilet paper
- Products made from recycled plastic
- Cloth diapers for babies
- Non-asbestos brake lining and clutch facing
- Filters for kitchen sinks
- Non-bleached and non-dyed towels
- Valves for adjusting flow and water saving-type faucets (including water saving tops)
- Packaging materials using wastes
- Soap made from waste edible oils
- Bricks made from waste lime
- Construction materials made from waste glass
- Products made from used tires
- Bulb-type fluorescent lamps
- Cloth shopping bags

Construction materials made from waste stone powder  
Biodegradable engine oil for two-cycle engines  
Biodegradable hydraulic oil  
Bricks made with inorganic sludge  
Palette made with waste wood  
Water-economizing toilet stool  
Low sulfur petroleum  
Building materials using remnants from burning  
Blast furnace cement  
Returnable can collectors  
Refillable containers  
Water-economizing fittings for toilets stools  
Biodegradable sponges  
Machines for recycling used antifreeze  
Gravel made of waste materials  
Oil filters  
Electricity saving low mercury fluorescent bulbs  
Plastic containers with same material log attached  
Solar water heaters  
Low pollution ferro-concrete pipe  
Energy efficient refrigerator with no CFCs

